

3 FAH-2 H-450 CLASSIFYING THE POSITION

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Classification of a foreign national position involves three processes: fact finding, analysis, and evaluation. Fact finding is concerned with locating, assembling, and reviewing facts directly pertinent to a position, and the background information related to the position. Analysis involves examination of the principal elements of a position, including duties and responsibilities, desired or required qualifications, and factors such as difficulty of the work, supervision received, available guidelines, judgments exercised, commitment authority, personal contacts, and supervision exercised. Evaluation is the determination of the proper title and grade of the position through use of the Interagency Foreign Service National Position Classification chapter 3 FAH 2 H-400 and the position classification standards contained there in 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix J. Each of these processes is discussed under a separate heading in this section.

3 FAH-2 H-451 FACT FINDING

3 FAH-2 H-451.1 General

Fact finding may be accomplished by personal investigation, by reviewing reports (including position descriptions) containing the facts, or by a combination of these methods. Fact finding for any single classification action may involve only investigation, or only the reading of written source material, but most fact finding requires a combination of both. Fact finding is the basis of proper classification, and provides justification for the series, title, and grade selected. When fact finding is incomplete, analysis is inadequate and evaluation is likely to be incorrect. Complete and accurate fact finding permits sound analysis, accurate evaluation, and correct classification.

3 FAH-2 H-451.2 Background Information

There are many kinds and sources of background information, and the information has varying degrees of relationship to the classification process. Some information is directly related, whereas other information, e.g., general occupation information, is more related to the classifier's knowledge of his trade than to the classification of an individual position. Some of the more commonly encountered types of background information are:

A. Organization Charts

Organization charts of embassy components and associated agency offices or missions which clearly show the lines of authority, indicate relationships between positions, and identify American officials and positions of local supervisors and employees by position number, title, grade, and name of incumbent, are invaluable in gaining an understanding of the organization in which the position exists, relationships between positions, the level of the position in the unit, and the classification of associated positions in the organization. Most organizational units should have such organization charts. Where such a chart does not exist, the classifier should prepare a rough draft organization chart and clear it with the American official in charge of the unit.

B. Staffing Patterns

Staffing patterns provide much of the same type of information as organization charts, but often do not show lines of authority, provide an organizationally arranged listing of positions and employees, or provide an integrated listing of both American and local employee positions. However, because of the frequency with which they are revised, staffing patterns are a valuable source of background information.

C. Manuals and Written Instructions and Procedures

Such publications provide both occupational and organizational background information. The classifier will not study them in the same manner as a person performing the work they cover, but rather from the standpoint of learning the programs, the products of the work, systems, practices, procedures, work flow, and other information that will promote a better understanding of the positions to be classified. Usually such publications can be reviewed in the unit in which the position to be classified is located.

D. Position Classification Standards Introductory Material

Groups and series of Interagency Foreign Service National Position Classification Standards are prefaced by introductory material intended to provide users of the standards with background information which will enable them to use the standards intelligently. This is particularly valuable background information for kinds of work which are less generally understood than commonly encountered occupations. The introductory material which prefaces the Consular Group and the several Consular Series is a good example.

E. Local or Agency Studies

Embassies, associated agency offices and missions, and agency authorities frequently make studies of particular occupational areas which contain material capable of contributing to an understanding of the affected positions. Unclassified material of this kind should be reviewed. Usually the American official in charge of the organizational unit will direct the classifier's attention to these studies.

F. Discussions with Supervisors and Employees

A great deal of useful background information can be obtained during personal contacts with American and FSN supervisors and employees. Observation of the work processes and work products can also be extremely valuable. Anything learned in this manner which is of significant or lasting value should be documented in writing and retained for reference. It is necessary to use judgment in separating fact from opinion, and in assessing the validity of statements when employees appear to be exaggerating the difficulty and importance of the work.

G. Position Description Files

The position descriptions of other positions which are related to the position to be classified can be of considerable value to the classifier.

3 FAH-2 H-451.3 Position Descriptions

The position description is the principal source of information used for fact finding in position classification. A classifier who reads a well prepared position description and acquires adequate background information will have the information needed for proper analysis and evaluation in most cases. However, the classifier and the Personnel Officer must ensure that position descriptions are presented for classification at the proper times, and that they contain the needed information.

The necessity for revising position descriptions and submitting them for classification action at the proper time is stressed elsewhere in this chapter. However, a reasonable degree of currency in position descriptions will not be attained unless appropriate procedures are established. The Personnel Office should initiate a local instruction which fixes responsibility for submitting position descriptions which report changes in major duties and responsibilities as they occur. The Personnel Officer should also be attuned to change in organization, functions, and level of staffing which may have an effect upon position classification, and request new position descriptions on the affected positions if they are not submitted within a reasonable period of time. Orientation sessions for newly reporting American officials should also stress the responsibility for keeping position descriptions current.

The 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix B , “Instructions for Preparing Interagency Foreign Service National Position Description,” provides instructions which should result in properly prepared position descriptions. However, it is suggested that classifiers see to it that FSNs who are to write position descriptions obtain a copy of the instructions and are also counselled and advised on how to write a position description. The review and editing of rough drafts of position descriptions may well be worth while in some cases.

3 FAH-2 H-451.4 Obtaining Additional Information

Even though the classifier has carefully examined the available background information and made appropriate efforts to obtain well written position descriptions, it maybe necessary to secure additional information during the course of the classification process because of deficiencies or conflicts in position facts. The three most commonly used methods of obtaining additional information are written requests, telephone calls, and work audits.

A. Written Requests for Information

Sometimes a position description will be so badly written that only a complete rewrite can provide adequate information for classification purposes. In such cases, it should be returned for rewriting, usually with an explanatory telephone call to the American supervisor, but in some cases with a memorandum indicating the deficiencies and explaining how the description should be rewritten. If possible the classifier should also visit the official in charge of the unit or the local supervisor to explain the problem personally. The written request for information is also a good method of obtaining additional information from employing units located some distance from the Personnel Office, as would be the case with a consulate in another city.

B. Telephone Calls

When the additional information needed concerns a small number of easily defined items, or when the employing unit is located at some distance from the Personnel Office, a telephone call to the employee, the FSN supervisor, or the American official in charge of the unit may be effective in securing the information. Care should be taken to insure that this method is not used where a work audit is more appropriate.

C. Work Audits

The work audit or on-the-job interview with the incumbent of the position is the best method of securing additional information in most situations. It seeks to obtain the additional information needed by the interview method in the work environment, where the work process, work products, and working conditions can be observed. The work audit and the closely related interviews with the local supervisor and the American official in charge of the employing unit also provide opportunity to explain classification instructions and procedures, help employees and supervisors carry out their responsibilities for preparing position descriptions, and generally foster acceptance of the classification program. A written report of the audit should be attached to the position description. The report should identify the position by number, title, and grade, and name of employee, and should also indicate the name of the

classifier, date of the audit, and information obtained. The audit report should be signed by the classifier, the employee, and the local supervisor or the American official in charge of the unit.

3 FAH-2 H-451.5 Fact Finding Problems

A. Disagreements Between Employee and Supervisor or Official in Charge of Employing Unit

Sometimes disagreements exist as to what the duties and responsibilities of a position actually are. Often, these are differences between the manner in which the official or supervisor wants the position to function, and the way in which it is actually operating; in other cases the differences may relate to the intended versus actual extent of authority and responsibility. The position must be classified on the basis of the actual duties performed, but management rather than the employee has the authority to prescribe the duties of a position. Such conflicts must be resolved by an appropriate level of management before the position is classified.

B. Inaccurate Position Descriptions

A position description submitted for classification action may be noted to contain statements of dubious accuracy or apparent inaccuracy which may have a significant effect upon the classification of the position. This is a valid reason for auditing the position, even though the official in charge of the unit has certified the accuracy of the description. The Personnel Officer is charged with classifying positions correctly, but this does not mean the Personnel Officer should base classification decisions on statements in the position description without regard to their accuracy. When position descriptions are suspected of containing significant inaccuracies, the position should be audited and the facts established. If the audit confirms the suspected inaccuracies, the matter should be brought to the attention of the official in charge of the employing unit with a request that the description be corrected. The Personnel Officer and the official in charge of the employing unit should be able to come to agreement on an accurate description of the position in virtually all cases. Where an agreement is not reached, the Personnel Officer will: (1) classify the position on the basis of the facts indicated by the audit report, or (2) refer the matter to a higher level official for decision. Whichever of the two methods of resolving the problem is used, the basis of the classification decision should be fully explained in the audit notes in order that the decision may be reviewed by post audit classification action at a later date.

C. Conflicts Between Positions

All conflicts between positions must be resolved. Conflicts may take several forms. A typical situation is one in which two employees in a unit claim to be performing the same duty, when that duty is not of a nature that it can be divided between two employees. Another common conflict is where an employee claims to operate without supervision or to receive supervision only from the American official in charge of the unit, while the position description of the FSN supervisor of the unit indicates supervision over the employee. Authoritative decisions should be sought from the official in charge of the employing unit in such cases, and the position descriptions should be revised or modified by appropriate audit notes.

3 FAH-2 H-452 ANALYSIS

3 FAH-2 H-452.1 General Discussion

Analysis is the step between fact finding and evaluation. It is the process of putting the facts together so evaluation can be accomplished. Steps in analysis include:

- Organizing and studying the facts about the position;
- Determining the probable series;
- Determining the distinctions between classes indirectly applicable or related standards;
- Organizing the position facts according to the criteria contained in the standards;
- Determining if all facts required by the standard are available and obtaining any which are missing;
- Determining if any other facts about the position are significant for classification purposes.

3 FAH-2 H-452.2 Organizing and Studying the Facts About the Position

This step involves assembly and careful review of the description of the position to be classified, descriptions of related positions, organization charts, staffing patterns, and other pertinent material, such as agency and local instructions, procedures, and manuals relating to the work. The purpose of the step is to understand the position and its organizational context. If this step is properly performed, the position will be classified on the basis of accurate facts; if the step is performed in a sloppy manner, the position may be misclassified.

A. The Cover Sheet

The cover sheet, form OF-298, Interagency Foreign Service National Position Description, is a good starting point since it provides helpful information about a number of points and may indicate areas about which questions should be asked. It will indicate whether this is a new position or a rewrite of an existing position. It should show the present classification of the position and whether a different classification is being recommended. It should indicate the name of the immediate supervisor and the organizational location of the position. The reviewer should determine if the organizational location shown is consistent with existing organization charts and staffing patterns, if the position was one of a group or the only position from that organizational unit submitted, and whether it appears likely that other position descriptions from that organizational unit should have been submitted.

B. Major Duties and Responsibilities

A number of aspects of this section should be carefully examined. What are the major duties and responsibilities? Are percentages of time indicated separately for each major duty? Are the duties described in vague and general terms, e.g., "handle," "coordinate," "contact," etc., rather than stating exactly what is done? Is high flown and meaningless language used? Is language copied from the position classification standards? Does the description show clearly what work is done by the incumbent of the position, rather than the work done by the office? Are examples of the work performed currently, consistent with the other duties of the position, and of a recurring nature, rather than things done once or twice, or a long time ago? Are there conflicts between this position description and others, particularly higher level or supervisory FSN positions?

C. Desired Qualifications

The qualifications desired or required of the incumbent of a position are factors in classifying it. Qualifications should be reasonable and logical for the duties of the position, rather than a reflection of the qualifications possessed by the present incumbent. Hence, the reviewer should be alert to the excessive educational, work experience, language proficiency, and other qualification requirements.

D. Position Elements

The position elements frequently present the features of the position which distinguish one level of work from another. Is the degree of supervisory control exercised over the position clearly explained, and is that explanation logical for the nature of the position and consistent with the organization chart and the position description of the immediate FSN supervisor? Are the guidelines

available to the position clearly indicated, and is the degree to which they are directly applicable or must be interpreted understandable? Are examples of the need to use judgment current and consistent with the duties and responsibilities? Does the statement on personal contacts indicate the purpose of the contacts in definite terms, explain the level of the persons contacted, and state the frequency of the contacts? If the position functions as a supervisor, is the number of persons currently supervised and the nature of the supervision clearly brought out?

E. Checking the Facts

When, as a result of studying the facts about a position submitted for classification action, there is reason to suspect or believe that the position description is inaccurate, vague, unclear or misleading, in conflict with another position, or not current, additional information should be secured in accordance with section 3 FAH-2 H-451.4 , "Obtaining Additional Information."

3 FAH-2 H-452.3 Determining the Series

When the facts about the position have been reviewed and additional information needed has been obtained, a determination should be made as to the series in which the position should be classified. This decision is made on the basis of guidance provided by 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix I , "Outline of Foreign Service National Position Classification Plan" and where standards have been prepared for the appropriate series, by the introductory material and title of the series. In some cases, however, particularly at small and medium sized posts, some positions may be a mixture of duties which are appropriate to different series. Such positions are referred to as "Mixed Positions," and are classified in accordance with the "Mixed Position Rule" contained in section 3 FAH-2 H-454.1 A. The series appropriate for the duty or duties performed for a majority of the time would usually be the series in which such a position should be classified. However, where a duty performed for less than a majority of the time (but not less than 25% of the time) is a recruiting requirement for the position, the position would be appropriately classified in that series.

3 FAH-2 H-452.4 Determining Distinctions Between Classes

The next step is to determine what distinguishes one class from another in the series that has been determined to be appropriate to the position. If directly applicable classification standards exist for that series, this step involves reading the standards for all defined levels of the series and noting the distinctions. For some kinds and levels of work, the distinction between classes might be duties which require a precisely defined level of skill and ability, such as recording shorthand notes of dictation at a specified number of

words per minute, whereas in other kinds and levels of work, the distinction might be a complex mixture of duties and responsibilities, relating in part to the size and scope of a particular operation. If directly applicable classification standards do not exist for the series determined to be appropriate to the position, the distinctions between classes must be determined from 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix G , “General Grade Level Guides” and from classification standards for related series. The related series must be selected carefully. The series need not be for similar kinds of work, but they must include standards which reflect similar levels of responsibility and which require similar qualifications. If, for example, the position to be classified requires a college degree in a particular field, the related series should, if possible, have standards for levels of work which have generally similar requirements and responsibilities. The distinctions between classes would be noted as in the case of directly applicable classification standards.

3 FAH-2 H-452.5 Organizing the Position Facts According to Distinctions Between Classes

This step involves re-reading the position description to pick out those parts of it which will provide the basis for deciding the class in which the position should be placed. The classifier may wish to underline significant parts of the position description in which this information is brought out, or to prepare brief summary notes on these points.

3 FAH-2 H-452.6 Determining If All Needed Facts Are Available

The preceding steps may reveal that information which will be needed to decide which class the position will be placed in is not available. Where the information is not complete, the additional information needed should be obtained at this time.

3 FAH-2 H-452.7 Determining If Any Other Facts About the Position Are Significant For Classification Purposes

The Interagency Foreign Service National Position Classification chapter and the classification standards contained therein (Chapter 3 FAH 2 H-400) take into account all factors which should be considered for classification purposes in normal circumstances. In rare circumstances, however, it may be appropriate to give consideration to additional factors relating to circumstances unique to a particular post. If such factors are believed to apply, they should be noted in order that they may be considered in the evaluation phase. Consideration of additional factors should be approached with extreme caution, and complete information and justification should be noted, since any deviation of this nature will be critically reviewed in post audit classification reviews.

3 FAH-2 H-453 EVALUATION

This step completes the classification process by determining the class, i.e., title and grade, appropriate to the position in accordance with the Interagency Foreign Service National Position Classification chapter and the position classification standards contained in Chapter 3 FAH 2 H-400 .

3 FAH-2 H-453.1 When Directly Applicable Classification Standards Exist

Under these circumstances, the process is one of comparing the information about the position assembled in the analysis phase against the distinctions between classes in the appropriate series standards to find the closest match. More specifically this involves:

- a. Studying all of the standards for the series to become familiar with their content and distinctions between classes.
- b. Finding the class standard that appears to be most applicable to the position, and reviewing the position facts and the distinctions between classes to verify that the class standard fits the position. The standards for the next higher and next lower classes in that series, if such exist, should be checked to confirm that the class selected is the best fit.
- c. Allocating the position to the grade indicated by the class standard and assigning the appropriate title provided by the standard.
- d. Attaching a brief statement of the basis for the allocation to the Personnel Office copy of the position description. In all complex classification actions, and certainly in all positions classified to grades FSN-7 through FSN-12, this explanation should be prepared on the worksheet provided in 3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix H , "Survey Team Analysis and Evaluation Worksheet."
- e. Recording the classification of the position in Item 5a of the Interagency Foreign Service National Position Description, and completing the certification of Item 12.

3 FAH-2 H-453.2 When Directly Applicable Classification Standards Do Not Exist

Under these circumstances, the process involves the same steps indicated in the preceding section, but in connection with utilizing the General Grade Level Guides and standards for related series identified in the analysis process, as noted in section 3 FAH-2 H-452.4 above.

3 FAH-2 H-453.3 Gaps in Standards Coverage

Within each series, standards have been written for the most typical classes, but not necessarily for all possible classes. For example, a series might include standards for classes at FSN-9, FSN-8, FSN-7, and FSN-5. This alignment would reflect three levels of technical work and one level of

clerical work, the duties and responsibilities of which were not considered to warrant placement in the FSN-6 level. The absence of a standard for the missing class does not preclude allocating a position to FSN-6 if the position is determined to be stronger than the standard for FSN-5 and weaker than the standard for FSN-7.

3 FAH-2 H-453.4 Allocation of Positions to Levels Above the Highest Class For Which a Standard Exists

Within each series, standards have been written to appropriately reflect the highest and, for most series, the lowest levels of duties and responsibilities and all other typically encountered classes within that type of work. Thus, the highest level class for which a standard exists is intended to recognize the highest skills and knowledges and the most difficult and complex situations found at the largest and most sophisticated overseas establishments. For that reason, the highest level class standard in a series usually contains a statement to the effect that the standard indicates the highest level of work recognized in that series. **When a standard contains such a statement, overseas establishments are not authorized to classify a position concerned with that type of work to a higher level.** Establishments may submit a request for authority to exceed the standards to the Executive Director of the appropriate Regional Bureau or to equivalent authority in the agency headquarters office of associated agencies which exercise classification authority. Such requests must include a copy of the position description, and detailed evaluation report setting forth the justification for exceeding the standards. The justification must be stated in terms of the classification factors and distinctions between classes discussed in the standards. The evaluation report shall make it clear exactly how the position exceeds the highest level standard for the appropriate series. Requests for authority to exceed the highest level established for a series by classification standards are appropriate only in truly rare and unusual circumstances. Such requests are not to be submitted for the purpose of raising an employee's grade to recognize high quality performance, long service, or any other factors unrelated to the duties and responsibilities of the position involved. Establishments should not submit such requests without very careful consideration, since they involve a great deal of work, not only for the overseas establishment, but also for agency headquarters offices. Requests may not be submitted by telegraphic communications.

3 FAH-2 H-454 CLASSIFICATION PRINCIPLES

Certain classification principles must be applied to all positions in identified classification situations, and to the classification of specific types of positions in all situations.

3 FAH-2 H-454.1 General Principles

A. Mixed Positions

A mixed position is one composed of duties which are typically a part of two or more recognized occupations, e.g., mail clerk and chauffeur, telephone operator and clerk typist, etc. The duties of a mixed position may be appropriate to two or more series and two or more grades. The general rule which will be followed in classifying mixed positions is that mixed positions will be classified to the series and grade appropriate to the duty or duties performed for a majority of the time. In some situations it may be appropriate to classify a position on the basis of a duty performed for less than a majority of the time if the ability to perform that duty is an essential recruitment requirement for the position; however, no position will be classified on the basis of duties performed for less than 25% of the time. Higher level work should not be distributed among lower level positions for the purpose of raising the grades of the latter; in fact, no position should be classified to a higher grade than that appropriate to the duty or duties performed of a majority of the time except in those rare cases where it is impracticable to organize the work of the employing unit on any other basis.

The process of combining different duties in a mixed position introduces a factor of variety of work into the classification process. Whether or not the variety factor is of sufficient weight to warrant additional classification credit depends upon the level of the work and the extent to which each separate duty involves distinctly different skills and guiding regulations and procedures. The combination of several low level duties which, although different, do not involve detailed knowledges of regulations and procedures, would not warrant additional classification credit, whereas combinations of duties involving high level functions the performance of which requires substantial knowledge of separate and complex regulations and procedures might warrant additional classification credit. Combinations of tasks in mixed jobs vary infinitely; however, insofar as these mixtures affect classification, (and except for specific FSNPC standards which provide a special rule for classifying mixed positions involving the work of three or more series within a single occupational grouping), the rule-of-thumb is that where a mixed position involves performance of three or more different occupations, (i.e., occupations found in three or more different occupational groups in this chapter) all of which are allocable to the same grade, and all of which require **a substantial knowledge of a separate body of complex regulations and procedures**, consideration **may** be given to allowing such additional credit. Additional credit for variety should never exceed one grade, and should be approached with considerable caution.

B. Positions filled below the full performance grade level(Trainee Positions)

Posts should fill vacant positions below the full performance grade levels where applicants demonstrate high potential for the maximum grade level but do not meet the full education, training and/or experience requirements as stated in the chapter 3 FAH 2 H-400 , and/or it is considered that more than six months of on-the-job training will be required to achieve full performance level.

When a position is filled below the full performance grade level, either by outside recruitment or transfer from within the organization, a position description cover sheet (3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix B Exhibit) should be prepared for each of the trainee levels planned and attached to the position description of the full performance level. Each cover sheet should state at which grade level(below the full performance grade) the particular trainee position is being established and should briefly indicate what limitations are being placed on the full performance level in terms of the assignment of lesser duties and responsibilities, the introduction of greater supervisory controls, etc.

Posts are not required to use the term “trainee” in the position title when filling a position below the full performance grade level. However, trainee status should be noted in the position number, e.g., the training level for full performance level position N4501 should be designated as N4501T. If the position is to be filled at more than one lower trainee levels, T1, T2, etc., would be used following the position number on each of the cover sheets for each of the training levels. The T-1 sheet should be the lowest grade level, T-2 the next highest, etc.

When the FSN position classification system is installed at a post, post management may determine that certain FSNs who occupy positions which have been upgraded by the survey team should not be promoted immediately to the new full performance level of the position due to lack of qualifications or less than satisfactory service at full performance level. After the survey is approved but prior to implementation, the post will prepare position description cover sheet(s) (3 FAH-2 H-400 Appendix B Exhibit) according to the above instructions for the trainee(i.e., less than full performance) level(s) to which each incumbent determined to be in trainee status will be assigned.

C. Grade Limitations

In the various occupational groups and series, each type of work has a lower limit or entrance grade at which employees usually enter the occupation, and an upper limit or ceiling grade which constitutes the highest level an

employee can achieve in that type of work. For example, in the Telephone Operator Series, FSN-3 positions are qualified to handle all routine switchboard operations. Those sole operators with shift responsibilities are classified at the FSN-4 level, which is the ceiling grade for nonsupervisory telephone operation positions. In a mission, full performance level positions could exist at both the FSN-3 and FSN-4 levels and both positions could be filled at a lower trainee level. However, regardless of how well a nonsupervisory operator performs the assigned duties, promotion beyond FSN-4 can be realized only if the employee is assigned to telephone supervisory position at FSN-5 or is transferred to and trained in the FSN-5 work of another occupational series.

D. Standby Skills and Abilities

These are skills and abilities required to perform work which once were characteristic of a position, or have occurred occasionally and may be characteristic or occasional in the future, but which are only standby skills and abilities possessed by incumbents or standby skills and abilities proposed as qualification requirements. These will not be considered in classifying the position.

E. Minor Duties

Minor duties are those which are performed for relatively insignificant portions of time, i.e., 5% or less, are incidental to the reason for the existence of the position, and do not play a part in determining the qualifications of the position. Positions shall be classified on the basis of their major duties and responsibilities. Minor duties should not be given significant consideration in the classification process.

F. Organizational Parallelism

It is sometimes argued that positions should be at the same grade because they are at the same organizational level, e.g., all unit heads within a branch. This is fallacious thinking, since it ignores the possibility that the different unit head positions may have duties and responsibilities of completely different levels. Positions should be classified only on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and required or desired qualifications.

G. Grade Attraction

It is sometimes argued that the grade of a subordinate position should be based upon a relationship with the grade of the position of the supervisor. This is also fallacious thinking, since the supervisory position may have responsibilities which are completely different in nature from those of the subordinate. Positions should be classified only on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and required or desired qualifications.

H. Journeyman Level Concept

The journeyman level concept is sometimes misapplied in classifying positions. It is quite proper to speak of the journeyman level of a **specific** kind of work, e.g., journeyman mechanic, journeyman mail clerk, journeyman clerk stenographer, etc., but it is completely improper to classify positions on the basis of a concept that a particular grade is the journeyman grade for **all** clerical work or for all professional work, etc. Once again, positions are to be classified on the basis of their duties and responsibilities, and the qualifications required or desired.

I. Accuracy

The need for accuracy in a position is sometimes offered as justification for a higher grade. In such cases, accuracy is really a consideration bearing on the employee's performance rather than a classification factor. In this sense, accuracy means carefulness, thoroughness, and application to the details of the work, and should be expected of all employees. Hence, no classification credit is given for accuracy.

J. Honesty and Custody of Money

Responsibility for the custody of money is frequently cited as justification for higher grades. Such an argument implies that a higher grade will guarantee honesty while a lower grade might result in dishonesty, presumably on the theory that pay, rather than fundamental character, controls personal traits. Even if this theory were sound, and it is not, the amount of additional pay that would be necessary to overcome the results of a weak character would be greatly in excess of what is possible under a prevailing rate system. No classification credit will be given for custody of money or other valuables beyond that which is appropriate for the inherent difficulties and responsibilities of the work.

3 FAH-2 H-454.2 Principles Applicable to Specific Kinds of Positions

A. Supervisory Positions

The classification of positions which are represented as supervisory positions should be approached with a great deal of caution. The limited size of most foreign service national staffs and the presence of American supervisors considerably reduces the incidence of true supervisory positions filled by FSN employees. Many positions represented as having supervisory responsibilities actually function as a senior employee with responsibility for review of work and for providing guidance to one or two other employees in

the unit. The limited supervisory responsibilities of such positions do not warrant classification credit to the extent that the grade appropriate for the nonsupervisory aspects of the position would be increased. Another type of position is that of a working supervisor who supervises from three to six employees and also performs the most difficult and important work of the unit, but does not have continuing management responsibility for the operation of the unit. Such positions draw most of their strength from the non-supervisory work performed, but do have sufficient supervisory responsibility to warrant a one grade bonus over the fully qualified or journeyman worker level subordinates. The third typically encountered type of supervisory position has substantial management responsibility for the continuing operations of an organizational unit with usually about eight to fifteen, but sometimes fewer, employees. This type of supervisor plans and organizes the work, prepares schedules, assigns and reviews work, selects or participates in the selection of subordinates, trains employees, provides technical guidance to subordinates, engages in management planning of the unit, and performs the typical personnel management aspects of supervision, including rating performance, recommending promotions and disciplinary actions, etc. This level of supervision usually warrants a two-grade premium over the journeyman level of subordinate. Other levels of supervisory positions, where they exist, are defined by position classification standards.

B. Assistant Supervisor Positions

From a position management standpoint, assistant supervisor or “alter ego” positions are warranted only in situations where the span of control or the complexities of supervision in a given situation are such that one person cannot effectively carry out necessary supervisory responsibilities. This is extremely rare, and such a situation certainly would not exist in small units where only a few employees are supervised. From a classification standpoint, no classification credit will be given for assistant supervisory positions unless the assistant supervisor performs identifiable and bona fide supervisory functions for a majority of the time and under circumstances which prevent the supervisor from accomplishing these functions.

C. Acting For the Supervisor

The senior non-supervisory FSN in a unit is sometimes designated to act for the local employee supervisor in the supervisor’s absence. No classification credit is given the senior employee’s position for this designation. As a matter of policy, employees will not be paid on a full time basis for supervisory duties that are performed only for a minor part of the total work year. When an employee performs a part or all of his supervisor’s duties for an extended period of time, the post may elect to give the employee a temporary promotion of one or more grades, depending upon the degree of

supervisory responsibility actually assumed during the period of the “acting” assignment. Such temporary promotions are not usually made for periods of less than sixty days. Effective upon the supervisor’s return to duty, the temporary promotion is terminated and the “acting” supervisor is returned to his previous grade and salary step rate. “Saved rate” salary provisions do not apply to this situation.

D. Translation Duties

A large number of local positions require bilinguality. The levels of English language ability required in various positions have been classified and defined in Appendix C, Language Qualification Requirements. Many employees in professional, technical, secretarial, and clerical positions translate from the host country language into English and vice versa certain letters, memoranda, newspaper stories, and other printed material as a part of their daily work. Ability to do this is one of the principal reasons for employing local personnel. Where translation services are needed only to provide the general nature or gist of what is contained in letters, memoranda, or printed material, the position of the employee providing this service will be placed in the series and grade appropriate to the major duties and responsibilities of the position, and no classification credit beyond consideration of the requirement for bilinguality contained in the qualifications section of the position description will be given. Where the principal reason for the existence of the position is to provide translation service, the position will be classified in the Translator Series, in accordance with position classification standards for that series.

3 FAH-1 H-455 MAINTAINING CURRENCY AND ACCURACY OF CLASSIFICATION

Overseas establishments and regional bureaus of the Department of State and designated agency headquarters offices of the associated agencies which exercise classification authority over local employee positions should assure themselves periodically that the classification of all local positions is current and accurate.

3 FAH-2 H-455.1 Overseas Establishments

Overseas establishments are responsible for taking day-to-day action to keep the classification of local positions current and accurate. However, even the most careful fact finding, analysis, and evaluation processes carried out in connection with individual classification actions will not ensure that **all** positions are correctly classified. Inevitably, changes in the duties and responsibilities of some positions will be overlooked, and changes in the relationship between positions will to always be noted. Periodic examination of all positions at the same time is the only sure method of discharging this responsibility.

A. Annual Reviews

The annual reviews discussed in section 3 FAH-2 H-443.3 of this chapter ensures classification action on all positions for which the supervisor of each organizational unit has submitted new position descriptions. If the Personnel Office takes the initiative of checking into the possibility that the **reported** changes may have caused **unreported** changes in other positions, the annual review may provide some assurance that the classifications of all positions are current and accurate.

B. Classification Surveys

A classification survey is an intensive study of all positions in an organization or a component of that organization. Since all positions and their interrelationships are studied at the same time, a classification survey is the most reliable method of insuring the currency and accuracy of the classifications of all positions in an organization or organizational component. However, classification surveys are expensive and time consuming and should usually be undertaken only when there is reason to believe that the classification of positions is seriously out of line because of reorganization, changes due to increases or decreases in workload, unreported changes in assignment, or similar factors. When a complete classification survey is to be conducted, considerable care should be taken to explain thoroughly the reasons why the survey is considered necessary to employees and supervisors. New position descriptions should be obtained for all or nearly all positions, and organization charts and other pertinent background information should be carefully studied. Liberal use should be made of work audits to insure that all available information on each position is obtained. When classifications of positions have been determined, they should be discussed with the official of each organizational unit prior to being placed in effect. Usually, a written report of the survey, discussing actions taken and results achieved, should be prepared.

3 FAH-2 H-455.2 Agency Headquarters Offices

Headquarters offices are responsible for managing the classification function. In discharging this responsibility, their interest in the currency and accuracy of local position classification tends to focus on cost, compliance with prescribed instruction, and good management practices. The various agency headquarters offices may use different methods of assuring themselves that the classification of positions is current and accurate. Some will place considerable reliance on monitoring staffing patterns, while others may require pre-audit approval of classification actions which would place positions in or above certain grades which the agency headquarters office specifies. Most will make use of classification surveys conducted by

headquarters personnel or contract consultants. Classification determinations made by or for agency headquarters offices in connection with classification surveys, when approved by the agency headquarters office, constitute post audit actions, and supersede classification actions taken by the overseas establishment.

3 FAH-2 H-456 EMPLOYEES CLASSIFICATION APPEALS

3 FAH-2 H-456.1 Interagency Foreign Service National Employees Position Classification Appeals System

Each overseas post shall establish an interagency Foreign Service National position classification appeals system which shall provide:

- a. All Foreign Service Nationals the right to appeal the classification of the position incumbered without fear of reprisal or prejudice;
- b. An Interagency Foreign Service National Classification Appeals Review Board which shall adjudicate classification appeals; and
- c. Supervisors with a procedure for discussing management disagreements as to the classification of positions under their control directly with the Personnel Officer, rather than under the appeals system. Supervisors will not join in, or take a position in support of, or opposed to, an employee classification appeal, except that a Foreign Service National supervisor may, of course, appeal the classification of his/her own position.

3 FAH-2 H-456.2 Interagency Foreign Service National Employees Classification Appeals Review Board

The Board shall consist of one or more representatives of the embassy and one representative of each associated agency which desires to be represented. The representatives shall be American officials who occupy positions which are at least one organizational level higher than the Personnel Officer who takes or recommends classification action on local employee positions. The embassy representative, usually the Administrative Officer, will serve as Chairman of the Board. Each appeal shall be adjudicated by a three member panel of the Board, consisting of the Chairman, a representative of the agency from which the appeal originated, and one other member of the Board who may come from any agency. The decision of the Board shall be in writing, and based solely on an analysis and evaluation of the duties and responsibilities of the position in reference to the appropriate position classification standards. The decision may not be based upon, or consider, the employee's length of service, quality of performance, or personal attainments and achievements. The decision of the Board shall be final except that it is subject to review and change by post audit action of a position classification review team, appointed by PER/FSN and the appropriate agency headquarters office.

3 FAH-2 H-456.3 Procedure

a. Employee appeals shall be in writing, and shall be based upon the employee's opinion that specific duties and responsibilities set forth in the position description of record warrant a higher classification than assigned. The appeal shall be addressed to the Interagency Foreign Service National Classification Appeals Review Board, via supervisory channels and the Personnel Officer.

b. Supervisors shall add such factual statements as are considered necessary, and forward the appeal, but as noted above, shall not join in, or take a position in support or in opposition to the employee appeal.

c. The Personnel Officer shall review the appeal, and obtain and attach any additional information which appears to be needed for the Board's deliberations. Material forwarded with the appeal should always include the Personnel Officer's evaluation of the position, and reference to the classification standards believed to control classification of the position. If the Personnel Officer believes, upon review, that the appeal should be granted, that action may be taken, and this will terminate the appeal.

d. The board shall jointly review, discuss, and evaluate the appeal. Where considered appropriate, the Board may question the appellant and/or his or her supervisor or supervisors. The Board may also request the Personnel Officer to provide technical information and explanations of the classification standards but the line between providing information and participating in the decision process should be carefully preserved. Only members of the Board should be involved in making the decision on the appeal. When a decision is arrived at, it should be documented in writing, together with a brief statement for the basis of that decision.

e. The written decision shall be forwarded promptly to the employee through channels. Copies of the decision, together with all supporting documentation, shall be forwarded to PER/FSN, and to the regional bureau or the agency headquarters office of the associated agency concerned.

f. PER/FSN, the regional bureau and the agency headquarters office of the associated agency concerned shall review the appeal for information and consideration of the need for eventual post audit review.

g. The appellate decision of the Interagency Foreign Service National Classification Appeals Board shall be final, except that it is, like all other classification actions, subject to post audit review.

3 FAH-2 H-457 THROUGH H-459 UNASSIGNED